

CLAIMS

1. An information retrieval/distribution system comprising:

an information retrieval request unit for requesting the retrieval of several kinds of information which are scattered on a network; and

a plurality of database management units for managing databases in which said several kinds of information are stored,

wherein each of said plurality of database management units has management information about the databases which are managed by each database management unit, and has management information about the databases which are managed by other database management units which can be connected to said each database management unit through said network; and

wherein when a retrieval criterion is input to said information retrieval request unit, one of said plurality of database management units, based on said management information in one database management unit, retrieves the information in the databases managed by said one database management unit, and requests any other database management unit managing the database in which the information related to said retrieval criterion is stored, to retrieve the information in the databases managed by said other database management unit, thereby distributing the information corresponding to said retrieval criterion to the information retrieval request source.

2. The information retrieval/distribution system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said one database management unit manages a plurality of databases and can register the kinds of said plurality of databases as management information and, when the information retrieval is requested by said information retrieval request source, said one database management unit retrieves said plurality of databases to collect the

required information, and then changes the data format of the collected information to a unified format and distributes the collected information to said information retrieval request source.

5           3. The information retrieval/distribution system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said one database management unit has the function of requesting said other database management unit to retrieve the information in the databases managed by said other database management unit followed by receiving the result of the retrieval of  
10       said information from said other database management unit to distribute said result to said information retrieval request source.

15           4. The information retrieval/distribution system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said one manager has at least one of:

the functions of including the list of the management information possessed by said other database management unit in the management information of said one  
20       database management unit; comparing the management information of the database management unit which has been newly requested to retrieve the required information by said one database management unit with the management information of said one database management unit to  
25       obtain the difference between said both management information; and updating the management information of said one database management unit, based on said difference;

and the function of communicating with  
30       said other database management unit periodically and exchanging the management information with said other database management unit each other to update the management information of said one database management unit.

35           5. The information retrieval/distribution system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said one database management unit has the functions of:

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9. The information retrieval/distribution system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said one database management unit has the functions of:

registering the retrieval information of  
said information retrieval request source;  
executing the same retrieval periodically,  
based on said retrieval information; and  
sending the result of the retrieval to  
said information retrieval request source.

10. A computer readable storage medium storing:  
a means which retrieves the information in  
the databases managed by one of database management  
units, based on the management information in one  
database management unit, when a retrieval criterion is  
input to an information retrieval request unit for  
requesting the retrieval of several kinds of information  
which are scattered on a network; and

a means which requests any other database  
management unit which is able to be connected to said one  
database management unit through said network, to  
retrieve the information in the database in which the  
information related to said retrieval criterion is stored  
and which is managed by said other database management  
unit, based on the management information about the  
databases managed by said other database management unit.

11. A program for information  
retrieval/distribution allowing a computer, in order to  
retrieve information and distribute said information to  
the information retrieval request source, to operate as:

a means which retrieves the information in  
the databases managed by one of database management  
units, based on the management information in one  
database management unit, when a retrieval criterion is  
input to an information retrieval request unit for  
requesting the retrieval of several kinds of information  
which are scattered on a network; and

a means which requests any other database

- management unit which can be connected to said one database management unit, through said network, to retrieve the information in the database in which the information related to said retrieval criterion is stored
- 5 and which is managed by said other database management unit, based on the management information about the databases which are managed by said other database management unit.

TOP SECRET EMBASSY